

## **DNR Grants Town of Merrimac \$195,000 for Park Town to Purchase Property, Still Needs \$35,000**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **Contact Information:**

- **Tim McCumber, Deputy Clerk-Treasurer, Town of Merrimac: 608-643-6332**
- **Patrick Sheahan, Environmental Grants Specialist, DNR: 608-275-3315**
- **Jim Welch, Executive Director, National Heritage Land Trust: 608-258-9797**

(MERRIMAC, WI) - The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has awarded a \$195,000 grant from its Lake Protection Grant Program to purchase the Evan and Joanne Clingman Property on Lake Wisconsin at Weigand's Bay.

The Town has raised \$30,510 in private donations to purchase the property for conservation and park space on Lake Wisconsin. With the Lake Protection Grant, the Town still needs to raise another \$34,490. The Natural Heritage Land Trust (NHLT) of Madison, WI has stepped forward with a bridge loan to complete the purchase of the property. The transfer of ownership is slated for November 7, 2003.

The property is one of the last truly undeveloped parts of Lake Wisconsin along its northern shore. The natural surroundings create one of the oldest growth forests on Lake Wisconsin as well as one of the largest undeveloped shorelines on the lake. The DNR has purchased an adjacent Clingman property and anticipates it will receive the Badger Army Ammunition Plant (BAAP) Pump House property when the United States Army transfers ownership in the near future. The town plans hopes acquire an additional 5 acres for the park when Hwy. 78 is relocated in 2007. In total, the future of this park area will contain just over 17 acres of property with over ½ mile of shoreline.

Unlike other major lakes in Wisconsin, such as Castle Rock or Petenwell lakes, Lake Wisconsin does not have a major park area on the lake. Presently, there is a DNR boat ramp at Moon Valley Resort and a Sauk County boat ramp next to Summer Oaks Resort, but neither facility allows people to enjoy a nature hike or provide major access to on-shore fishing access.

The town plans to work out an arrangement with the DNR to manage the property along with the other lands it has acquired next door. Some of the early vision for the park shows the town's portion mainly being used for fishing access, hiking trails and nature observation points. When Hwy. 78 is abandoned, it is possible the abandoned stretch along the bay could be utilized for handicapped fishing. The DNR also has a long range vision of providing day camping sites and possibly boat access on its portion. Throughout the bay, the DNR has also budgeted for improving the fish habitat with off shore reefs and fish cribs. DNR officials are cautious about their future plans as these projects take funding and might not be able to happen for several years.

The initiative of purchasing land by the Town of Merrimac for conservation is unique in that these projects are generally seen at the county or state level. The township's effort to conserve this property might be one of the first for a local township. While other municipalities (such as cities and villages) and counties often preserve park space it is rarely been seen at the township level. The DNR hopes the success of this project will encourage other townships to follow suit. The town has been raising the funds to pay for this property through grants and private donations. This is an important part of the purchase considering the money needed for the purchase is currently about 40% of the town's current tax levy.

The town has authorized honoring those who make donations to this project by honoring them with a plaque or monument. Donations of \$500.00 or more will qualify for this recognition. Because the donation is being made to a government entity, as well as for park conservation, donations are tax-deductible. Donors are asked to consult with their tax professional to make certain their donation is in fact eligible. Donations of any size are welcome.

If you would like to make a donation for this conservation project, you can make your check payable to the "Town of Merrimac Clingman Property Acquisition Fund" and mail it to: Town of Merrimac, Attn: Tim McCumber, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer, P.O. Box 115, Merrimac, WI 53561.

McCumber is available to speak to area groups or business and to answer any inquiries about the project. He can be contacted at (608) 643-6332 or by email at [mccumber@shopstop.net](mailto:mccumber@shopstop.net).

### Donors to Town of Merrimac Clingman Fund

Name	Pledge
Robert & Dolores Bahr	\$10.00
Micheal & Heidi Gendusa	\$50.00
Sauk County Sportsmen's Alliance	\$500.00
Roxbury Valley Trap Club	\$500.00
Walleye North America	\$2,000.00
Wisconsin River Sportsmen's Club	\$500.00
Richard & Nancy Grant	\$500.00
Spring Green Rod & Gun Club	\$500.00
North Freedom Rod & Gun Club	\$50.00
Paul & Phyllis Endres	\$50.00
Rotary Club of Sauk Prairie	\$500.00
Merrimac Conservation Club	\$500.00
In Memoriam of Edward W. Buss	\$500.00
Bart & Char Olson Foundation	\$10,000.00
Philip Miller	\$500.00
Roger & Eva Spear	\$500.00
Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance	\$100.00
James & Judith Koym	\$500.00
Glacier Valley Gobblers	\$2,000.00
Jaycees of Wisconsin Foundation	\$250.00
Evan & Joanne Clingman Family Memorial	\$10,000.00
WI DNR Lake Protection Grant	\$195,000.00
Summer Oaks Condo Assn	\$500.00
<b>Total Funds Received</b>	<b>\$225,510.00</b>